

**Blind Task Force Meeting
March 7, 2007
Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA)
2100 I-70 Drive, S.W.
Columbia, Missouri**

Members Present: Paul Ajuwon; Steve Berman; Donna Borgmeyer; Susan Ford; Chip Hailey; Heike Imler; Kent Kolaga; Patti Schonlau; Jim Sucharski; Ella Wolfe.

Members Not Present: Brad Hart, Russ McCampbell.

Guests Present: Diane Golden; Karen Halsey; Jennie Mascheck; Aundrayah Shermer.

DESE Staff Present: Lori Conner

Call to Order/Introductions: Patti Schonlau called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Steve Berman took roll call.

Review and Approval of Agenda: Diane Golden, Missouri Assistive Technology (MAT), was added to the March 7 Agenda. Ella Wolfe made a motion to accept the updated agenda. Donna Borgmeyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Review and Approval of December 6, 2006 BTF Minutes: Page 2 – Under “Blind Skills Specialists,” 6th line – change the sentence that reads: “Ten districts do not have a VI and O&M program,” to read: “Ten of those districts that she has served do not have a VI and O&M program.”

Page 2 – Under “Annual Literacy Study,” line 8-9 – Add a period after “case” in the sentence that reads: “DESE acknowledged that this was the case;” and delete the remainder of the sentence, “and that they have talked with MSB to look into the possibilities of adding additional information to the APH collection.”

NIMAS: Diane Golden from Missouri Assistive Technology (MAT) was invited to the Blind Task Force (BTF) meeting to discuss NIMAS and NIMAC. She indicated that NIMAS is standard for an electronic file set, and NIMAC is the place where files sit (an electronic repository) housed at American Printing House.

There was a discussion regarding the GH player. Chip Hailey made a motion to invite Roselie Backer to the May 16 BTF meeting to demonstrate the GH player. Steve Berman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

BTF Membership Vacancies: Two recommendations have been submitted to the DESE Commissioner for the BTF student representative vacancies; and one recommendation has been submitted for the O&M Vacancy. No recommendations have been received for the special education administrator or public school building administrator vacancies.

Committee Assignments: The BTF Chair has assigned the members to serve on a minimum of three committees. To view the assignment list, go to web address: <http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/btfcommittees07.pdf>

National Agenda: Nothing to report.

Standing Committee Updates

Annual Study Committee: The topics in the Annual Study Report have been rearranged to flow smoother. The Committee welcomes suggestions from the Task Force on restructuring the Report.

Budget/Governmental Affairs Committee: It was reported that there is a need to get involved with the Missouri Senate and the House of Representatives for a better understanding of upcoming issues related to House Bill 718 and Senate Bill 16 and Bill 566.

Status Funded BSS Positions/Status of Bill: It was reported that Senator Harry Kennedy is sponsoring Bill 566; Representative Bryan Pratt is filing a companion bill to Senator Kennedy's bill on textbook revisions; and it is hoped that Representative Ed Robb will amend the bill at next week's House Budget Appropriation Committee meeting by recommending an increase over last year's Blind Skills Specialists (BSS) budget. DESE will follow-up and report on this at the next BTF meeting.

Budget Requests for State Fiscal Year 2008: \$165,000 general revenue for FY08 has been proposed for FY08.

Transition Committee: The BTF Chair appointed four members to the Transition Committee and asked that they work on Goal #9 of the National Agenda, with transition from high school and beyond as their main focus. The Committee will plan a suitable date in March to have their first conference call.

Ad Hoc Committee Updates

Vision Summit Committee: More than 200 people will be participating in the 2007 Children's Vision Summit, "Transition Pathways to Success" which has been entirely funded. The format is the same as last year with 15 breakout sessions. Among the presenters will be Kent Kolaga (IEP Issues), Ruby Ryles (braille), Dr. Tom Porter (low vision issues), Debbie Head (pre-school transitions), Sheilia Styron (guide dogs), Dr. Chris Craig (College transition issues), Kevin Shields (financial record keeping for VI students), Tom Culliton (Sports for VI students), and Susan Ford (with Rehab teachers on low-tech devices). The final program will be finished as soon as possible.

The opening keynote speaker is Mr. Nolan Crabb. The conference will close with three transition panel speakers, William Hawkins (banking investment background), Steve Schnelle (DFS) and James Hollins (DeVry College student).

The Vision Summit Committee will meet periodically via conference call to finalize details for the Summit. These details include finalizing the list of presenters, speakers, and exhibitors and working with the Capitol Plaza Hotel to ensure that all audio/visual equipment is in place for the Summit. In addition, the informational packets for the Summit will be prepared at the Missouri School for the Blind under the supervision of Steve Berman and Patti Schonlau.

Eligibility Criteria for VI Under the New State Plan: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education, has received numerous comments to the State Plan's proposed 2007 visual impairment/blindness changes to the state regulations implementing Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Comments may also be made during rule-making.

The Outreach Committee made a motion and it was unanimously accepted that the Task Force support and propose the new language of visual impairment in the proposed state plan:

Visual Impairment/Blindness Definition

Visual Impairment, including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility

A child displays a visual impairment when:

- A. a visual impairment or a progressive vision loss, not primarily perceptual in nature, or a deteriorating eye condition which will result in loss of visual efficiency (e.g. glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, or macular degeneration) or a visual loss caused by a disturbance of the posterior visual pathway and/or cortex has been diagnosed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist;
- B. visual acuity has been determined to be:
 - 1) for visual impairment of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye with best correction by glasses;
 - 2) for blindness of 20/200 or less in the better eye after best correction by glasses or a visual field measuring 20 degrees or less; and/OR,
 - 3) functional loss of vision as documented by a functional vision/learning media assessment, AND,
- C. the visual impairment/functional vision loss adversely affects the child's educational performance.

A functional vision assessment is conducted by a teacher certificated in the education of students who are visually impaired (TVI) or a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS). The assessment must include the performance of tasks in a variety of environments requiring the use of both near and distance vision and recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation and an orientation and mobility evaluation. A learning media assessment is conducted by a teacher certificated in the education of students who are visually impaired (TVI). The learning media assessment must include recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student and whether or not there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area.

MAP Improvement Committee: No updates reported.

Blind Skills Specialists Effectiveness Study Committee: The Committee will plan a suitable date to meet for a conference call. DESE will check with the State Operator regarding after-hour conference calls.

Outreach Committee: The Outreach Committee met for a conference call on March 1, 2007. The minutes from the conference call are attached; and are also posted on the web: http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/summary3_01_07outreachcc.pdf

The Committee is to review resource needs supplied by MSB to provide summer programs; and RSB and AER may be involved.

Governors Council: Applications are now being accepted for the July 22-24, 2007 Youth Leadership Forum. More information may be found on the web at: <http://www.gcd.ia.mo.gov/2007ylyf.shtml>

On March 1, 2007, Ms. Linda Baker, a longtime member of the St. Louis Governor's Council, was named the new executive director.

Current Workshops/Activities in State: St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired and The Lighthouse for the Blind are offering a new program, STARS (Special Technology and Adaptive Resources for Students). The program is held on the first and third Saturday of the month and gives students and parents an opportunity to learn a wide variety of hands-on information about adaptive technology.

The St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind is sponsoring Project STEP (Summer Technology and Employment Program). The program will be held June 11-29, 2007 at St. Louis Society for the Blind. The focus of the program is "intensive lessons in adaptive technology and living skills." The application deadline is May 1, 2007. For more information, contact Kevin Hollinger at: kjhollinger@sbcglobal.net, or phone: (636) 578-0124.

More information on both the STARS and the STEP program may be found on the web at: <http://www.slsbvi.org/about/chldservs.html#stars>

MSB held a Braille Challenge (an academic contest for Braille readers) on February 15, 2007. There were 75 participants from Missouri and Kansas involved in the competition.

Future BTF Agenda Items:

- Invite Rosalie Backer to the May 16 BTF meeting to demonstrate the GH player
- Introduction of Heidi Atkins-Lieberman, DESE Special Education Assistant Commissioner
- Debriefing new devices (there will no longer be a cassette machine through prototype) for new NLS through Wolfner Library
- Discussion for promoting/releasing coin for the January 4, 2009 Louis Braille 200th Birthday Celebration
- Victor reading demonstration (Patti)
- Discussion of having an early Fall 2008 Children's Vision Summit Program (to benefit new teachers who have VI students for the first time)

Susan Ford moved to table the discussion of the 2008 Children's Vision Summit for the May 16 BTF meeting; and in preparation of that discussion, a survey question regarding preference of a Spring or Fall Children's Vision Summit will be added to the 2007 Summit Evaluation. The move was seconded and unanimously approved.

Upcoming BTF Meeting Dates/Location:

May 16, 2007, Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), Columbia, Missouri
August 8, 2007, Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), Columbia, Missouri
November 14, 2007, Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), Columbia, Missouri

Kent Kolaga made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Steve Berman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

(Attachment 1: March 3, 2007 Agenda/Summary)

(Attachment: 1)

**AGENDA/MINUTES
Conference Call
BTF Outreach AdHoc Committee
03/01/07 1:30 -2:30 PM**

The meeting began late because the State Operator forgot to connect the conference call. All members were present with the exception of Aundrayah. Paul announced that Aundrayah's father had passed away earlier this week and she was not available.

1. Matrix Parameters - To include MSB's Outreach web pages "resources" and "Links of Interest."

Jim reported matrix is intended to be used to provide in-state resources for those seeking such from MSB. Committee members need most recent version of the matrix to review once again. BSS phone numbers were updated as all were incorrect.

2. Flexible Service Models - Summer Expanded Core Curriculum Program

Jim reported MSB has received several calls about the KEYS Program and the first KEYS student should begin soon. Summer program was discussed and Jim reported MSB would be willing to do the program, but was unable to do so at this time because of funding and staffing restrictions. Jim is to provide proposal with cost and staffing needs for committee to review. Determined to include RSB (Kent) and AER into such a program. Jennie to provide AER contact info.

3. Regionalization of Services - Models

- a. Advantages/Disadvantages
- b. Resource Needs
- c. Statutory, Regulatory, Organizational Changes Needed
- d. Other factors which need to be considered

The committee determined that Co-Op option is the best solution, if coupled with stronger DESE requirements. Jennifer thought stronger compliance provisions would increase better use of TVIs and COMs statewide. Jennie suggested proposed language for new State Plan would go a long way towards resolving the problem. Kent is to collect and review language and send it out to the committee for review. There was a consensus of the committee that the proposed language change for the State Plan should be recommended to the Task Force.

4. Assistive Technology

- a. What does the Committee wish to do with this shared charge?
- b. Assess present resources
- c. Possible models to address need

The committee did not get to this item due to the meeting already running 15 minutes overtime.

5. Other business/Needs

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM